

Alejandra Y. Castillo – Why State-EDA Collaboration is Vital

Hello, I'm Alejandra Castillo, and I'm honored to serve President Biden and our nation as US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

At EDA, our mission is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness and preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. Our investment policy is designed to establish a foundation for sustainable job growth and the building of durable regional economies throughout the United States.

This foundation builds upon two key economic drivers: innovation and regional collaboration. Both of these economic drivers rely on states, our key partners.

On the collaboration side, states are a critical partner for EDA at the headquarters level where we work for funding for programs that benefit states, at the regional office level, where we work towards meeting your project needs as well as at the local level, where economic development districts (or EDDs) are working to meet the needs of your state's citizens.

Collaboration is also driven by the alignment of state strategies with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (or CEDS) that are developed by EDDs in your state. By including EDDs in state strategy development and with the CEDS reflecting state priorities, we have a great opportunity to improve economic outcomes, create a more resilient economy, and offer economic opportunities for everyone throughout society.

States are also critical partners in the innovation space. It is critical that our nation has a dispersed network of tech and innovation investments. Our current tech centers will continue to lead the world, but we can't ignore the talent and tech hubs that exist throughout the nation. By working closely with both state leadership and local development districts, EDA can fuel a network of technology hubs to spread the benefit of innovation and economic growth to touch all Americans.

EDA has seen unprecedented financial support in the last few years. Whether it's our Build Back Better Regional Challenge, or the Million Dollar Statewide Planning Grants, EDA is excited about how these new programs will drive thoughtful investments in States and communities and build an innovative and collaborative economy for the 21st century.

We will continue to rely on state economic development leaders to share interests and concerns with us and other stakeholders to fuel program development in your priority areas. I encourage state economic development leaders to closely engage with EDA, our regional offices, and your economic development districts to access our wide array of tools and assistance.

EDA is here to help states succeed and I look forward to seeing the great economic outcomes we can achieve together. Thank you.